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ABSTRACT

The study involving 43 kindergarten students was designed to describe some of the behavioral and academic characteristics of transition students (students with potential learning difficulties), examine whether or not the program philosophies and goals influence the effectiveness of the program for individual students with different characteristics, evaluate the behavioral and academic progress of students in transition classrooms, and determine how parents of these students view and understand the program. Data were collected using the Pupil Rating Scale (PRS), which measures behavioral characteristics in auditory comprehension, spoken language, orientation, motor coordination, and personal-social behavior; the Clymer-Barrett Prereading Battery (C-B), which assesses visual discrimination, auditory discrimination, and visual motor skills; and a parent questionnaire. Among findings were that referring kindergarten teachers rated students lower than either of the transition teachers on all three scales, parents' reactions to the program were generally positive, and significant progress was made as indicated by PRS ratings and C-B scores. Four illustrative case studies offer achievement data, teacher ratings and perceptions of the child, and the investigator's observations of classroom behavior. (SB)

# The Evaluation of Transition Programs:

# A Quantitative and Quasi-qualitative Look

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# INTRODUCTION

The early identification and programming for educationally high-risk students is becoming a popular trend in education. The rationale for this movement is to detect pupil characteristics that may lead to frustration and failure in academic endeavors. The aim is, then, to minimize the impact of such problems, if in fact they do arise, as the child progresses through school by providing some type of intervention before the child has a chance to experience failure. Although this appears to be a worthy aim, at least two issues have arisen from the practical aspects of the process. First, there is the issue of determining those characteristics in preschool and kindergarten children which may be associated with future learning difficulties. As might be expected, a variety of possibilities have been proposed, including characteristics such as language development, intelligence, attending, and responsiveness to teachers and peers (Forness, Guthrie, & Nihira, 1975; Keogh & Becker, 1973).

A related question arises as to how these high-risk characteristics may best be identified, and again, many solutions have been offered. Traditionally, such identification has been accomplished through the use of various standardized tests which provide quantifiable estimates of the child's status. These include intelligence measures, perceptual motor assessment, and general and reading readiness tests (Badian & Serwer, 1975). Other methods of identification that are becoming popular are those of teacher ratings (Keogh & Smith, 1970) observation of classroom behavior (Forness & Esveldt, 1975a, 1975b), and structured interviews of teachers (Hall and Keogh, 1978). The latter methods are often used to detect qualitative information concerning the child.

After one has decided what pupil characteristics are to be identified and how to best accomplish this task, the second issue which must be dealt with is how to best educate these children. Possible options may include retainment, special programming, or essentially doing nothing by allowing the child to continue in the prescribed program. In evaluating the issue of early identification of high-risk students, Keogh and Becker (1973) have cautioned that the benefits of such an endeavor must outweigh the possible damages that it may cause the child through labelling him as a potential failure. Thus, for early identification of educationally high-risk students to be a desirable practice, there must be knowledge of what should be identified, an appropriate means by which to do it, and an outcome that will benefit the student.

The program option selected for a student who has been identified as high-risk will depend partly on how the issue of readiness is perceived. Much controversy has arisen over the issue as to whether or not a child who may be cognitively, socially, or developmentally lagging behind others of his/her chronological age should either begin school or, if already in school, be allowed to move on to the next grade. One viewpoint is that the best prevention of emotional and behavioral problems, as well as of school failure of children who are diagnosed as having maturational lags, low intelligence, or learning difficulties, is either the repetition of kindergarten or delayed entrance so that they can "catch up" to their peers and improve their self-esteem (Donofrio, 1977).

The opposite view is that delaying entrance to school and nonpromotion is either nonbeneficial or even harmful to the student. Those proponents of promotion feel that retention is a disadvantage to achievement

as well as creating other negative side effects such as instilling in them a feeling of inferiority (Abidin, Golladay, & Howerton, 1971; Dobbs & Nevill, 1967; Funk, 1969). Gredler (1978) further supported the philosophy that all children be allowed to enter school by suggesting that rather than delaying that entrance or retaining the child once he is there the school should adjust to individual differences and make plans for programs to remedy difficulties for any who need special help. Although many studies have been conducted to determine the educational value of promotion versus retention, no conclusive evidence has been produced to support either viewpoint. In an analytical review of the literature on this topic, Jackson (1975) found many instances in which the designs of the studies reviewed contained flaws which impaired the ability to make valid generalizations about the effects of grade retention on students' academic achievement. He concluded that there is a need for further research in this area which is of a higher quality than what has been done in the past.

The problems involved with early identification of children with potential learning difficulties as well as the dilemma of making critical decisions regarding retention and promotion have forced educators to develop alternative methods of dealing with these issues. One solution that has emerged is that of the transition classroom between kindergarten and first grade. The transition classroom would appear to provide a middle ground for the issue of retention versus promotion as well as a means of helping special needs students who for maturational, cognitive, or other reasons are not ready to enter the first grade. Although such classrooms are apparently increasing in numbers and would appear to be a

logical step in providing a more individualized and adequate education for some children, there is little research available to provide a means to assess the value of these programs. Evaluation of the transition classroom is necessary, and yet, becomes a difficult task when considering the heterogeneous group of children being dealt with, in addition to differing emphases in the classroom experiences and school philosophies.

Results from previous investigations suggest that the study of only academic variables has not provided sufficient evidence in support of the transition classroom and that other factors need to be considered in order to reach more accurate evaluative conclusions (Wilson, Hewett, Sheets, & Thomas, 1978). Supporting this concept, Hall and Keogh (1978) have suggested that educational risk status is comprised both of factors of academic aptitude as well as factors of behavioral adaptability. They found academic components, measured by IQ, verbal facility, reading and arithmetic achievement, to be relatively independent from behavioral adaptability components, expressed in social relationships in the classroom with teachers and peers. Both components, however, made a significant contribution to the risk or nonrisk status of students.

The purpose of this study was, therefore, to: 1) describe some of the behavioral and academic characteristics of transition classroom students, 2) examine whether or not the program philosophies and goals influence the effectiveness of the program for individual students with different characteristics, 3) evaluate the behavioral and academic progress of students in transition classrooms, and 4) determine how parents of these students view and understand the program.

## METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The subjects in this study, the instruments used, and the procedures followed, are described in this chapter.

### Subjects

Forty-three white middle-class children from a midwestern community enrolled in two transition classrooms were the subjects for this study. This group consisted of 23 students, 17 male and six female, for the 1978-1979 school year, and 20 students, 11 male and nine female, for the 1979-1980 school year. Students in these classrooms at two different schools were referred to the class by their kindergarten teachers, with parental consent, because it was felt that they were not ready to enter first grade.

### Instruments

#### The Pupil Rating Scale (PRS)

This instrument was designed as a measure of behavioral characteristics to screen for learning disabilities. The five areas for behavioral evaluation on the scale include auditory comprehension, spoken language, orientation, motor coordination, and personal-social behavior. Ratings on items from auditory comprehension (comprehending word meanings, following instructions, comprehending class discussions, and retaining information) and spoken language (vocabulary, grammar, word recall, storytelling-relating experiences, and formulating ideas) are combined to form the verbal score (VS). The nonverbal score (NVS) is comprised

of items from the areas of orientation (judging time, spatial orientation, judging relationships, and knowing directions), motor coordination (general coordination, balance, and manual dexterity), and personal-social behavior (cooperation, attention, organization, new situations, social acceptance, responsibility, completion of assignments, and tactfulness). All five areas are combined to form a total scale (TS) score.

Clymer-Barrett Prereading Battery (C-B)

This battery is comprised of six subtests assessing visual discrimination, auditory discrimination, and visual-motor skills. The total score yields an indication of a child's preparedness to read with respect to these three major categories and may be used in screening children for admission to first grade.

Parent Questionnaire

A questionnaire was sent to all of the parents of the transition students in the spring of both the 1978-79 and 1979-80 school years. It was formulated by the author to gain insight into parents' attitudes and reactions to their children's transition room experience (see Appendix A).

## Procedures

Ratings on the PRS were completed for each student to obtain information describing the teachers' perceptions of these students. Ratings were obtained from the transition teachers in the spring of 1979 for students leaving the program. In the fall of 1979 ratings were obtained from both the kindergarten teachers who previously had these students and the transition room teachers. Ratings were again obtained from the transition room teachers in the spring of 1980 in order to make further comparisons of the students' progress over the course of the transition year.

Total full form C-B scores, reported as percentiles and stanines, were used as a measure of academic progress made during the transition room experience. Percentiles were converted to normalized standard scores for the purpose of statistical analysis. Scores from the C-B, which were teacher administered to the students in the spring of their kindergarten year and again in the spring of their transition year, were collected for both the 1978-1979 and 1979-1980 school years.

In addition to information collected on the C-B, PRS, and parent questionnaire, teacher interviews were conducted to determine the philosophy, goals, and activities of the two classrooms. Also, observational data were collected on four students during the 1979-80 school year (see Table 1 for summary of data collection). Students were chosen on the basis of reason for referral given by their kindergarten teachers and upon recommendation by transition room teachers. The investigators selected one student from each school who was refered for primarily cognitive deficiencies, and a second student who was referred for primarily social/behavioral problems. Two observation periods were spent in each classroom during the fall and two during the spring of the 1979-80 school year to gather behavioral information on the four case study subjects.

Data Analysis

Table 2 summarizes the data base used to answer the research questions of the study. The data were first analyzed to describe the transition students as a group. Means and standard deviations on the PRS and C-B were used to describe the characteristics of these transition students. Correlated means t-tests were used to compare fall and spring ratings by transition teachers on the PRS, and kindergarten and transition spring scores on the C-B to determine behavioral and academic changes made during the

transition year. The descriptions of program philosophies and goals were used as a reference in the interpretation of how pupil characteristics interacted with the program in terms of the kind of progress made during the year.

Secondly, since research has indicated that high-risk students are not a homogeneous group of children, data were also used to describe some of the qualitative characteristics and changes of the four selected transition students, in order to evaluate more specifically the effectiveness of the program in meeting individual needs. The case study descriptions were based on information from the C-B, teacher perceptions and PRS ratings, and classroom observations.

On the questionnaire, percentages of yes and no responses were computed to examine parent/school communication as to the purpose of the program as well as the child's progress in the program, and the parent's perceptions of the effect of the experience on their children's academic progress, behavioral and emotional development, and social relationships. Additional comments that the parents made regarding their perceptions of the transition experience for their child are reported (see Appendix C).

Table 1

Data Collection Timetable

| Year | Spring |
|---|---|
| 1978-79 | 1. PRS (Transition teachers' ratings)<br>2. C-B (end of Kindergarten, 1978)<br>3. C-B (end of Transition, 1979)<br>4. Parent Questionnaire |
| **Year** | **Fall** |
| 1979-80 | 1. PRS (referring Kindergarten teachers' ratings)<br>2. PRS (Transition teachers' ratings)<br>3. Classroom observations (by investigator) |
| **Year** | **Spring** |
| 1979-80 | 1. PRS (Transition teachers' ratings)<br>2. C-B (end of Kindergarten, 1979)<br>3. C-B (end of Transition, 1980)<br>4. Parent Questionnaire<br>5. Classroom observations (by investigator) |

Note. C-B scores given in the fall of the 1978 and 1979 transition years were available and are reported in Appendix B but not utilized in the data analysis.

Table 2

Research Data Base

| Research Questions | Data Base |
|---|---|
| 1. What behaviors characterize the transition room student? | 1. a. Kindergarten and transition teachers' PRS ratings<br>b. Kindergarten C-B scores<br>c. Classroom behavioral observations |
| 2. What are the philosophies and goals of the transition program? | 2. Teacher interview |
| 3. Do children benefit behaviorally and academically from the transition room experience? | 3. a. Comparison of fall and spring transition teachers' PRS ratings<br>b. Comparison of spring kindergarten and spring transition C-B scores |
| 4. What are the parental reactions to this program? | 4. Questionnaire |

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of transition room students, philosophies and goals of the transition programs, behavioral and academic benefits of the experience, and parent reactions to the program are reported for the group of students followed by the individual case studies.

### Group Characteristics of Transition Room Students

The behavioral characteristics of transition students are described by PRS ratings. The academic characteristics are described by performance on the C-B.

#### Behavioral Characteristics

Entering behavioral characteristics were identified by referring kindergarten teachers' and transition teachers' fall ratings on the PRS. Means and standard deviations were computed for the verbal scale (VS), nonverbal (NVS), and total scale (TS) scores by school and for the total group (see Table 3). As a total group, ratings by both kindergarten and transition teachers were approximately one standard deviation below the VS, NVS, and TS mean scores reported by Myklebust (1971) for his standardization sample. Furthermore, referring kindergarten teachers rated students lower than either of the transition teachers on all three scales.

#### Academic Characteristics

Total test percentile ranks on the C-B were converted to normalized standard scores (M=50, SD=10). Means and standard deviations were computed by school and for the total group on the spring kindergarten

Table 3

Mean Scores, Standard Deviations, and t-test Values on PRS

| | | K (fall) | | T (fall) | | T (spring) | | t[a] | df |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| School | n | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | | |
| **Verbal Scale Scores** | | | | | | | | | |
| A | 9 | 18.78 | 3.42 | 25.00 | 3.71 | 24.66 | 4.92 | -.39 | 8 |
| B | 11 | 19.55 | 4.30 | 23.18 | 2.68 | 27.91 | 2.43 | 5.76** | 10 |
| Total | 20 | 19.20 | 3.75 | 24.00 | 3.15 | 26.45 | 4.01 | 3.00* | 19 |
| **Nonverbal Scale Scores** | | | | | | | | | |
| A | 9 | 41.22 | 4.06 | 43.89 | 2.32 | 43.22 | 4.68 | -.57 | 8 |
| B | 11 | 37.82 | 6.91 | 39.91 | 4.13 | 48.55 | 5.87 | 8.95** | 10 |
| Total | 20 | 39.35 | 5.77 | 41.70 | 3.82 | 46.15 | 5.90 | 3.45* | 19 |
| **Total Scale Scores** | | | | | | | | | |
| A | 9 | 60.00 | 5.12 | 68.89 | 4.78 | 67.89 | 8.13 | -.60 | 8 |
| B | 11 | 57.36 | 10.48 | 63.09 | 5.59 | 76.45 | 7.51 | 10.67** | 10 |
| Total | 20 | 58.55 | 8.19 | 65.70 | 5.90 | 72.60 | 8.76 | 3.60* | 19 |

Note. Based on scores from 1979-80 school year.
[a] t computed between T (fall) and T (spring)
* $p < .01$
** $p < .001$

scores (see Table 4). The data indicate that, as a group, the students entered the transition classroom with average prereading skills ($\underline{M}$=50.53, $\underline{SD}$=5.95) when compared with national group norms.

## Program Philosophies and Goals

The philosophies and goals differed somewhat for the two transition programs. While both schools were concerned about academic as well as social and emotional growth for the students, these factors were given different degrees of emphasis. School A's philosophy is that a child who comes into the transition program is not necessarily restricted to a four year primary course. With the smaller classes and more individual attention for each student, the goal is to enable each child to make maximum academic progress, possibly enabling him to enter second rather than first grade the following year. The same curriculum as first grade is followed but different materials are used in some subjects. The reading program is the same as first grade with the exception of review time in the fall of alphabet concepts. Different materials are used in math, with each student working on an individualized program at his own rate. A typical day's activities involved the following: reading groups; recess; story and discussion time; social studies, with use of filmstrips and discussion; math, both group and individaul work; free work time; lunch; story; work time at desks or learning areas; reading groups; recess; educational TV; science; filmstrip.

School B's philosophy is that the child will follow a four year primary course and prepares the child for first, not second, grade. The primary goals are to prevent the child from labelling himself as a

Table 4

Mean Scores, Standard Deviations, and t-test Values on C-B

| | | K (spring) | | T (spring) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| School | n | M | SD | M | SD | t | df |
| A | 16 | 50.12 | 4.96 | 59.19 | 3.16 | 10.27* | 15 |
| B | 18 | 50.89 | 6.82 | 60.33 | 5.53 | 5.25* | 17 |
| Total | 34 | 50.53 | 5.95 | 59.79 | 4.59 | 9.04* | 33 |

Note. Based on scores from both 1979-79 and 1979-80 school years.

* $p < .001$

failure and to help him improve poor self-concepts which may have resulted from previous failure, and to help him cope with the school setting. Materials used in the curriculum are different from those used in either kindergarten or first grade, with the exception of reading, which is programmed. A typical day's activities in this class included: opening; math; story writing; music; recess; story and discussion; small reading groups; large group reading; lunch; reading; films; recess; workbooks of discrimination exercises; and language arts.

## Behavioral and Academic Benefits

Comparisons of fall and spring transition teachers' PRS ratings were made to determine behavioral changes during the transition year. Scores from kindergarten spring C-B and transition spring C-B were compared to assess academic gains (see Appendix B for master data table).

### PRS Ratings

The analysis of fall and spring transition ratings for the 1979-80 school year showed that the fall ratings at School A were higher than those at School B on all three scales, while spring ratings on all scales were higher at School B. Additionally, spring mean ratings of School A students were lower on all scales than fall ratings. Correlated means t-tests were computed for VS, NVS, and TS by school and for the total group for the school year 1979-80 (see Table 3). This analysis showed that for School A no significant changes for any of the scales were observed between fall and spring PRS ratings, while significant differences ($p < .001$) were observed on all scales of the PRS for School B. For the total group, significant changes ($p < .01$) were noted for all three scales.

C-B Scores

Results as shown in Table 4 indicate that the mean prereading performance did not differ for the two classes as students entered the programs in the fall and that students at both schools made nearly equal gains by the end of the school year. The t-test analysis as shown in Table 4 between kindergarten (spring) and transition (spring) by school and total group indicates that significant progress ($p < .001$) had been made by all groups.

## Parental Reactions

Percentages of responses for combined schools for all items on the parent questionnaire are found in Table 5. Forty-three questionnaires were sent to the parents, and 28 were returned, resulting in an overall return rate of 65%. Return rates for School A and School B were 61% and 76%, respectively. Parents were asked to make additional comments regarding their child's transition experience. A representative sample of these comments are found in Appendix C.

Overall, parental reactions to the program were positive. All parents understood why their child was referred to the transition room and felt that they were kept well informed of their child's progress. Most parents indicated that their child had shown development in academic, behavioral, and social characteristics. Some children were reported to have experienced difficulty with friends outside of their class as a result of placement in this special class. Nearly all parents felt that their child was ready to progress to the next grade, with the exception of two who were undecided.

Table 5

Percentages of Parental Responses to Questionnaire

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Mother % | Both Parents % |
| 1. | Who completed questionnaire | 79 | 21 |
| | | Male % | Female % |
| 2. | Child's sex | 66 | 34 |
| | | Yes % | No % |
| 3. | Understand reason for referral | 100 | -- |
| 4. | Class objective explained | 100 | -- |
| 5. | Knowledge of activities provided | 100 | -- |
| 6. | Visitation to class | 97 | 3 |
| 7. | Informed by school of | | |
| | a. academic progress | 100 | -- |
| | b. behavioral development | 100 | -- |
| | c. social relationships | 100 | -- |
| 8. | Child shown more interest in school | 87 | 13 |
| 9. | Improvement in child's ability to work by himself | 93 | 7 |
| 10. | Shows curiosity to learn | 93 | 7 |
| 11. | Better acceptance of responsibility | 89 | 11 |
| 12. | Problems with friends outside transition room | 23 | 77 |
| 13. | Observed changes in | | |
| | a. academic abilities | 100 | -- |
| | b. behavior | 76 | 24 |
| | c. relationships with others | 71 | 29 |
| 14. | Now ready to enter first grade | 93 | 7 undecided |

Note. Questions have been abbreviated. See Appendix A for complete form.

## Case Studies

The four case studies represent two students from each of the two transition rooms evaluated. Students have been given fictitious names to preserve their anonymity. These case descriptions are a compilation of information collected over the course of the transition year and include achievement data, teacher ratings and perceptions of the child, and the investigator's observations of classroom behavior. Approximately two days were spent in each school by the observer in November and again in April of the 1979-80 school year. Both anecdotal notes and interval behavior counts were utilized to record observations. Behaviors during interval recording were categorized as Verbal Positive (VP), Attending (AT), Nonattending (NA), and Disruptive (D). Each student's behavior was recorded during the same minute interval, with the investigator observing for the first 15 seconds and recording the second 15 seconds for the first child, and then observing 15 seconds and recording 15 seconds for the second child. One or two interval observation periods, approximately 20 minutes in length, were recorded each day in both of the schools during a variety of activities.

### Case 1: Carol

Carol is a quiet girl who comes from a family which has provided good background experiences and is the middle child out of five. She was referred to the transition room at School A because of her timid and withdrawn personality and because she was not ready for reading. She was reported to have problems with visual memory of letters and reversal problems when she began the transition year. Social maturity was considered to be average for her age.

As Carol entered the transition class in the fall, her reading achievement level was determined by her kindergarten C-B scores. Her performance placed her in the sixth stanine and 76th percentile, indicating average capabilities in reading readiness skills.

Ratings of Carol's behavioral characteristics on the PRS by her referring kindergarten teacher indicated that she was below average on all items assessing auditory comprehension and spoken language and on items of judging relationships and knowing directions in the orientation area. Average abilities were noted for items of judging time and spatial relationships in the orientation areas, as well as all items in the areas of motor coordination and personal-social behavior. Her combined verbal score was below average, nonverbal score was average and the total score was below average. Her transition teacher, however, gave her average ratings of 3 in all areas. The question arises as to whether the difference in ratings is due to Carol's maturation over the summer months or differences in teacher judgments.

Classroom observations by the investigator indicated that Carol engaged in VP behaviors such as answering questions or contributing to class discussions approximately 13% of the time observed. AT behaviors such as listening to the teacher or working on task were engaged in 82% of the time. She spent about 5% of the time in NA behaviors such as looking around or out-of-seat activity. No D behaviors such as bothering other students or talking when she was not supposed to be were observed. Time spent in total positive behaviors (VP & AT) was 95%, whereas, time spent in total negative behaviors (NA & D) was 5%. During class discussions Carol was observed to frequently and quietly raise her hand to

contribute or volunteer answers to questions and to listen quietly while others were speaking. During seat work activities she went to work immediately when an assignment was given and stayed on task, working quietly, with very little looking around. During group work she was attentive to the teacher and was able to follow directions. Teacher responses to Carol were positive, showing interest when she made contributions and sometimes elaborating on Carol's responses. If a wrong answer was given, her teacher corrected it in a helpful manner or asked another student to help with the answer. No negative remarks were made to Carol.

In the spring, readiness progress was again measured by C-B scores. This testing placed Carol in the seventh stanine and 87th percentile, indicating good skill development. The word matching subtest was not completed for unknown reasons and may have depressed the total test score significantly, since no errors occurred in the completed half of this subtest.

Teacher rating on the PRS at the end of the transition year suggested that Carol was better able to retain information, relate experiences, formulate ideas, cooperate, and demonstrate better attention and organization. Other items received the same ratings as those made in the fall by the transition room teacher, with the exception of knowing directions, which was rated lower in the spring. Verbal, nonverbal, and total scores were all higher than those received in the fall from the same teacher.

Spring observations indicated that approximately 7% of the time was spent in VP, 91% in AT, 2% in NA, and none in D behaviors. Although AT

behaviors appeared to have increased while VP decreased, this may be due to the nature of the activities observed. Although the investigator attempted to observe similar activities in both fall and spring, those observed in the spring may not have provided as much opportunity for discussion and interaction by the student. However, total positive behavior was 98%, while total negative behavior was 2% showing overall increase in positive and decrease in negative behavior. No significant differences were observed in Carol's general classroom behavior from November to April. She remained a quiet and attentive worker and was willing and eager to contribute to class discussions. Perhaps more contrast would have been evident had fall observations been made at the beginning of the school year before she became as comfortable with the classroom routine.

While noticeable changes in Carol's classroom behavior were not apparent to the observer over the course of the school year observed, perhaps subtle behavior changes would not be expected to be detected by an occasional observer. Carol's teacher, on the other hand, reported that by the end of the school year Carol exhibited more outgoing behavior and volunteered more during discussions with good things to say. With consideration of both the amount of personal/social and academic progress made her teacher indicated that it would be recommended that Carol enter second grade the following year.

Case 2: Bobby

Bobby is an active boy who is one of two children in a home where reportedly some conflict exists. Bobby was referred to the transition room at school A primarily because of behavior problems and was described

as somewhat disruptive, bossy, not able to get along with other students, and having a short attention span. In addition, he had difficulty with visual-motor tasks and was not considered ready to read.

In the fall, Bobby's reading readiness level according to his end of kindergarten C-B scores was in the 6th stanine and 68th percentile. His kindergarten teacher commented that he needed extended readiness, especially in areas of auditory discrimination and visual-motor skills.

Ratings of Bobby's behavioral characteristics by his referring kindergarten teacher indicated that he was below average in each aspect of auditory comprehension, items of spoken language involving storytelling and formulating ideas, and items of personal-social behaviors regarding cooperation, attention, organization, responsibility and tactfulness. Spatial orientation was judged to be above average and all other items on the scale were rated as average. Combined verbal, nonverbal, and total scores were all below average. Bobby's transition room teacher rated him as average in the area of auditory comprehension, spoken language, motor coordination, and all items in orientation, with the exception of knowing directions, which was below average. Personal-social behaviors rated average included attention, organization, responsibility, and completion of assignments; those rated below average were cooperation, new situations, social acceptance, and tactfulness. The combined verbal score was average, while nonverbal and total scores were below average.

Classroom interval observation by the investigator indicated that approximately 13% of his time was spent in VP, 79% in AT, 6% in NA, and 2% in D behaviors. Total positive behavior was engaged in 92% of the

time, while 8% of his time was spent in total negative behavior. During class discussions Bobby participated and sometimes verbalized "I know" when he raised his hand to answer a question. He was quiet while others were speaking but some nonattentive behaviors were noted, such as having his head down on his desk or looking around. During seat work activities it took him a few minutes to get started on an assignment and, during work periods, he was observed to be often off-task and looking around the room. During group activites he showed some confusion in following directions and with left and right concepts. During free work time when his assignments were finished, he walked around the room looking for something to do and did not stick with one task for any length of time. For example, he would get some blocks and play with them for a few minutes, then get a puzzle, then color. His teacher's responses were positive when he made contributions. She gave praise for work done correctly and help when he needed it.

In the spring, reading readiness progress was evidenced by scores on the C-B which placed him in the 7th stanine and 89th percentile. He continued to show difficulty with perceptual-motor tasks, but no longer appeared to have problems in the area of auditory discrimination.

Teacher ratings on the PRS at the end of the year suggested that characteristics rated on this instrument did not change noticeably over the course of the year. All items for Bobby were rated exactly the same as they had been in the fall by his transition room teacher.

In the spring, Bobby spent approximately 4% of his time in VP behavior, 85% in AT behavior, 5.5% in NA, and 5.5% in D behaviors. Bobby's decrease in VP may have been due to less opportunity to contribute

due to the nature of the observed activities. Combined scores indicated that 89% of his time was spent in positive behaviors while 11% was spent in negative behaviors. Thus, no positive behavioral change was apparent over the course of the school year. The observer noted in general more inattentive behavior than during the spring observations. For example, Bobby was frequently seen looking out the windows or around the room or getting out of his seat to sharpen pencils or to talk to other students. During work periods it still took him a few minutes to begin to work, and when assignments were completed, he still moved rapidly from one task to another. His other behaviors and teacher responses to him also remained similar to those observed in the fall.

No noticeable changes were evident in Bobby's behaviors during the transition year, as evidenced by both teacher ratings and observations by the investigator. This may partly be explained by a teacher observation that his behavior was teacher controlled rather than self-controlled. When the first observations were made, possibly the teacher was already keeping the reported negative behaviors under control and then maintained them throughout the school year, so that no contrast was seen by the investigator. In terms of reading readiness skills, Bobby made noticeable gains, increasing from the 68th to the 89th percentile, and no longer showing difficulty with auditory discrimination tasks.

Case 3: Kevin

Kevin is a quiet, well-behaved boy who lives with his divorced mother and two older siblings in a good home environment. He was referred to the transition room at School B primarily because of poor emotional adjustments. He was described as shy, keeping to himself, and

lacking in self-confidence. In addition, his academic skills were borderline, with problems in visual and auditory memory.

When Kevin entered the transition room in the fall, his prereading level according to end of kindergarten C-B scores was in the 7th stanine and 79th percentile. These measurements indicated adequate to good prereading skills.

Ratings on the PRS by Kevin's referring kindergarten teacher indicated below average abilities on characteristics which pertained to retaining information, word recall, storytelling, and knowing directions. Items judged to be above average were cooperation, tactfulness, general coordination, balance, and manual dexterity. All other characteristics were considered to be average. The combined verbal score was below average. The nonverbal score was above average, and the total score was average. Kevin's transition room teacher rated him below average in retaining information, word recall, formulating ideas, judging time, knowing directions, and adapting to new situations. She judged him to be above average in following directions, cooperation, social acceptance, and general coordination. The verbal score was below average, while the nonverbal and total scores were average.

Classroom interval observations in the fall showed that Kevin spent approximately 8% of his time in VP behavior, 79% in AT behavior, 13% in NA behavior, and none in D behavior. Total positive behaviors were engaged in 87% of the time while total negative behaviors were engaged in 13% of the time. Kevin was observed to participate in class discussions and listen quietly when others were speaking. During seat work he worked quietly with occasional off-task behaviors like looking around

or talking to another student. During group work he was attentive to the teacher most of the time and was able to follow directions correctly. His skills were good in both fine and gross motor activities. Teacher interactions with him were positive. She always acknowledged his contributions to discussions and provided individual help with work when he had difficulty.

In the spring, academic reading readiness progress was again measured by performance on the C-B. His scores placed him in the 8th stanine and 96th percentile indicating considerable progress over his fall scores on this instrument.

Teacher ratings on the PRS at the end of the year showed that Kevin improved in comprehending class discussions, retaining information, word recall, formulating ideas, cooperation, attention, organization, responsibility, completion of assignments, tactfulness, and all orientation items. The combined verbal, nonverbal, and total scores were all above average and higher than the fall ratings.

The spring interval observations showed that approximately 4% of his time was spent in VP behavior, 87% in AT behavior, 9% in NA behavior and none in D behavior. He engaged in total positive behaviors 91% of the time, and in total negative 9% of the time. He continued to contribute to class discussions and to volunteer answers. He went to work immediately on assignments, worked quietly, and finished quickly. Some looking around and out-of-seat behaviors were still observed, but most of his time was spent in on-task behaviors such as working, listening, following directions, and paying attention to the teacher. Teacher responses continued to be positive. She gave praise both for good work and good behavior.

Although no substantial changes were noted by the investigator in Kevin's behaviors between fall and spring observations, other indicators suggest that he made considerable progress during the year. At the end of the year, his teacher gave him higher ratings than those at the beginning of the year on more than half of the characteristics described on the PRS. Kevin made substantial gains in reading readiness achievement, moving from the 7th stanine and 79th percentile according to end of kindergarten scores, to the 8th stanine and 96th percentile according to end of transition year scores. His teacher commented that he had made good progress in all areas during the year.

Case 4: Susan

Susan is an active girl who has an older sister and whose parents were divorced during her transition year. She lives with each parent half of the time and reportedly is having adjustment problems to the situation. She was referred to the transition room at School B because of both social immaturity and poor academic skills. She was described as being flighty, having difficulty concentrating and staying on task, and having a short attention span.

In the fall her level of reading readiness skills, according to her end of kindergarten C-B scores, was in the 4 stanine and 27th percentile. Beginning of transition year C-B scores also placed her in the 4th stanine and the 28th percentile. Her skills were low in word matching, ending sounds, auditory discrimination, and visual-motor tasks.

Ratings on the PRS by her referring kindergarten teacher indicated that she was below average on most items, receiving the lowest possible score on six characteristics. No behavioral characteristics were rated

above average, while those considered to be average included vocabulary, grammar, word recall, completion of assignments, and tactfulness. Combined verbal, nonverbal and total scores were all significantly below average. Her transition teacher also rated her below average on most items and above average on none. Items judged as average were comprehending word meanings, vocabulary, grammar, new situations, social acceptance, completion of assignments, and tactfulness. Combined verbal, nonverbal and total scores were all below average.

In the fall, interval observations revealed that about 3% of Susan's time was spent in VP behavior, 65% in AT behavior, 26% in NA behavior, and 16% in D behavior. Total positive behaviors were engaged in 68% of the time while total negative behaviors were engaged in 32% of the time. During discussions Susan participated, occasionally volunteering answers. During seat work periods she was often engaged in off-task behaviors such as looking around, walking around, talking to other students and standing up or sitting on the floor rather than at her desk. In group activities she was frequently not paying attention to the teacher and had difficulty following along with the class and following directions. She was slow to respond to teacher requests to put away or get out materials. Her teacher often had to remind her to get to work or follow through with instructions. The teacher made positive comments when Susan made contributions in class and provided individual help when it was needed.

In the spring Susan's reading readiness achievement was again measured by the C-B. She made evident progress with scores now placing her in the 7th stanine and 79th percentile.

According to ratings on the PRS at the end of the year, she had improved on the c[illegible]cteristics of following directions, retaining information, word recall, storytelling, formulating ideas, judging relationships, general coordination, balance, manual dexterity, cooperation, organization, responsibility, and completion of assignments. Combined verbal, nonverbal, and total scores were all higher than in the fall and nearly average.

Spring observations during interval recording showed that Susan spent no time in VP behavior, 84% of her time in AT behavior, 14% in NA behavior, and 2% in D behavior. She used 84% of her time in total positive behavior and 16% of it in total negative behavior. She did not appear to volunteer answers or contribute as much to class discussions as she did during fall observations. She continued to be active during seat work often on her knees on the floor by her desk, sometimes looking around, talking, and playing with materials at her desk. She seemed to pay better attention to the teacher, but still showed some difficulty following directions. At times it remained necessary for the teacher to remind her to get busy with her work. She was praised by her teacher both for good work and good behavior such as working quietly.

Susan made noticeable gains in all areas under consideration during the transition year. Significant progress in reading readiness was apparent as she moved from the 4th stanine and 28th percentile in the fall to the 7th stanine and 79th percentile by the end of the year. Her classroom behaviors also improved as evidenced by both teacher judgements and observations by the investigator. Her teacher commented, however, that Susan's progress had been sporadic, with good and bad days.

Case Study Summary

These individual studies indicate that children referred to these transition rooms are not a homogeneous group of children with a common pattern of behaviors and learning problems. When the children entered the transition classes their behaviors ranged from quiet and withdrawn to talkative and disruptive. Some students were attentive while others had difficulty staying on task. Academically, some pupils were below average according to C-B scores, while others had adequate prereading skills. A combination of academic and behavioral problems appeared to be contributing factors in the reason for referral in all four cases.

## Discussion

In light of the research which indicates the accuracy of teacher judgment in predicting which children will have difficulty in school (Feriden, et al., 1970; Haring & Ridgway, 1967; Keogh & Smith, 1970; Keogh, et al., 1974), it seems that the utilization of kindergarten teacher recommendations are an appropriate means of identifying and selecting students for transition programs. Kindergarten teachers in this study were able to identify accurately those students who were below average on behavioral characteristics on the PRS, suggesting that more precise identification of children who would benefit from the transition room can be achieved using standardized rating scales such as the PRS. This study also showed that kindergarten teachers consistently rated students lower on the PRS than did the transition teachers. One possible explanation for the higher ratings given by transition teachers may be attributed to real differences in the students' abilities as a result of maturation over the summer months.

Another explanation may be that, since the fall ratings by kindergarten teachers were based on how these students behaved at the end of the kindergarten year and were compared with a normal classroom of students with wide ranges in ability and maturity levels, they may have had higher expectations for their students and consequently rated students who did not measure up to expectations lower on the scale. Transition teachers, on the other hand, rated students at the beginning of the year, and being accustomed to children with lower and less varied range of abilities than those in a normal classroom, may have had lower expectations for performance and behavior, and thus rated the students higher on the items. Also, the difference may have been due to a combination of both student maturation and differing teacher perspectives.

Program Philosophies, Goals, and Benefits

The transition classroom as an intervention option for high-risk students differed to some extent in philosophies and goals and yet both offered similar learning activities and positive atmospheres. For example, teachers responded to students in positive ways, gave individualized attention to all students and worked at levels with them where they could achieve successfully. Perhaps this is why students at both schools showed considerable academic progress on the C-B regardless of whether the schools placed more stress on the objective of improving self-concept or academic skills. A significant difference was noted, however, between the schools regarding ratings on behavioral characteristics described on the PRS. Students at School B, where building self-concept was a primary goal, appeared to make more behavioral changes

then did students at School A. However, since only two transition teachers were involved in the fall and spring ratings and since no index of interrater reliability is available, it is not possible to conclude whether the difference in student ratings between schools is real and attributed to school philosophy or whether it is due to variability in teacher judgment. If the difference is real, future studies of transition classroom students comparing measures of self-concept with behavior change and academic achievement may reveal whether an emphasis on improving the students' feelings about themselves has any significant effect on their progress in school.

While both teachers noted at least some behavior changes during the year in most students, the observer was unable to detect any noticeable contrasts in case study subjects from fall to spring observations. It may be that by November when the first observations were made, the students were already making improvements in behavior patterns or that inappropriate behaviors were being controlled by the teachers. Also, since the observer was only in each class for a total of four days during the school year, gradual and subtle changes may not have been detected. Possibly shorter observation periods on a continuing basis for several weeks at the beginning of the year and again at the end of the year would have made the observer more sensitive to changes in student behavior. Also, more observation of the students outside of the classrooms may have suggested to what extent the students control their own behavior and to what extent their behavior is controlled by positive classroom management.

Parent Reactions

Nearly all of the parental responses and comments on the question-

naire indicated positive feelings about the transition program and that the children had benefited from it. However, since not all questionnaires were returned, there is the possibility that those who did not respond had different opinions about the program than those who did respond. Several parents indicated that the teacher, who cared and understood their children as well as gave them individual attention, had an important role in the success of the programs. Thus, as suggested by Chansky (1964), the quality of child teacher interaction may be as important as the program itself regarding the child's success. If parental willingness to help the child have a successful experience in school is a key factor as Stringer (1960) has suggested, then it would seem that the positive attitudes of the parents toward the transition room and their presumed interest in their child's education would also be contributing to the success of the program. Also, since the parents felt that they were well informed as to their children's program and progress, it would appear that close parent/teacher communication should continue to be stressed in order to maintain parental support and involvement in their children's education.

## Conclusions

Results of this study indicate that when a child is considered for placement in the transition classroom, it is important to consider the social and classroom behaviors as well as the academic abilities of the child. In this study no specific attempt was made to determine what criteria were used by kindergarten teachers to select students who would be placed in transition rooms. While some teachers made general comments such as the child was "not ready to read", "socially immature", or "short attention span", possibly more in depth interviews with these teachers would have revealed the extent to which academic and behavioral variables influence their decision. Also, use of a rating scale may help to specify

areas that need special attention and can be dealt with in the transition program. As Hall and Keogh (1978) have suggested, perhaps increasing teachers' awareness of the individual needs may in itself be a positive intervention.

While different school philosophy and goals did not appear to affect the extent of academic progress made during the transition year for the group as a whole, teacher ratings of students from the school that emphasized affective education to a stronger degree appeared to show more changes behaviorally. However, caution must be exercised in interpreting these results, due to the small sample of students and the fact that only two transition teachers completed the ratings, suggesting the possibility that differences could be attributed to differing teacher perspectives. It would be of interest to follow up this group of students through the elementary school years to see how future behavioral ratings compare with the transition ratings, whether or not those students who appeared to make significant gains during the transition year will continue to improve behaviorally, and whether this in turn influences their academic achievements.

The parents who responded to the questionnaire were generally favorable to the programs. Several parents indicated that the teacher was a key factor in the success of the program for their child. If this is the case, then the selection of teachers who have the patience and ability to interact positively and individually with the students should be of major importance to the program.

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